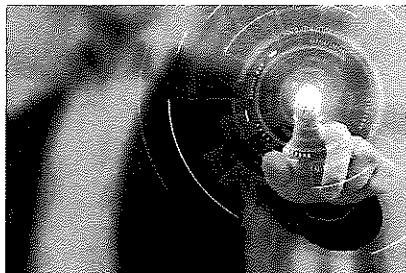


Stand and Fight!



Topic

Spiritual warfare

Theme

The Lord enables the believer to withstand Satan's assaults and live victoriously.

Desired Response

The learner will withstand Satan's assaults by putting on the whole armor of God and by using the Word of God as his or her sword.

Materials

- Visuals 30, 31.

Scripture Focus

Ephesians 6:10–24

Summary

Paul lists the pieces of the armor of God and related them to God's provision for our protection in spiritual warfare. God expects us to understand and don each piece. We can triumph over Satan and his forces by putting on the whole armor of God.

Outline

I. Be Strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10)

II. Put on the Armor of God (Eph. 6:11–17)

- A. Purpose for the armor (6:11–13)
- B. Pieces of the armor (6:14–17)
 - 1. Belt of truth (6:14)
 - 2. Breastplate of righteousness (6:14)
 - 3. Sandals of peace (6:15)
 - 4. Shield of faith (6:16)
 - 5. Helmet of salvation (6:17)

III. Join the Battle (Eph. 6:17–24)

- A. Pick up your sword (6:17)
- B. Support your fellow soldiers (6:18–24)

Memory Verse

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

GETTING STARTED

You're in the Army Now!

ASK: For those of you with military experience, describe for us some of the defensive weapons you carried or could access.

ASK: What defenses did your branch of the military employ?

Paul described the Christian soldier's defensive armor and offensive weapon. Both are key to winning spiritual battles against Satan and his soldiers. Paul's illustrative presentation helps us prepare for battle.

The Unseen Enemy

ASK: Imagine being in a battle and being shot at by an unseen enemy. What thoughts would go through your mind? (Q1)

ASK: What weapons and armor would you like to have at your disposal? (Q2)

Paul used physical armor and weapons to help us understand our battle against Satan, our unseen enemy. All of us are in a spiritual battle whether we realize it or not. And the enemy is shooting at us with fiery darts! This lesson will help us be prepared to defend ourselves and go on the offensive.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The Christian life presents many challenges, and none is stronger than the battle we wage against Satan and his evil forces. Jesus, however, said that the gates of Hell would not prevail against His church (Matt. 16:18). In the closing verses of Ephesians, Paul, a veteran of spiritual battles, conveyed how to resist the Devil.

I. Be Strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10)

Paul wrote, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). In the original Greek text, "be strong" is passive. It indicates we are made strong by a power outside ourselves. We can't resist Satan without the Lord, the source of our strength. Moreover, "be strong" is in the present tense. It means we ought to be strengthened continually. The Lord provides His strength for daily battles. To ignore Paul's instruction to be strong in the Lord would be devastating for a believer.

ASK: What do you predict would happen to the believer who lives oblivious to Satan's desire to defeat him or her? (Q3) *The believer will be either be discouraged and defeated or ignorantly blissful and living in sin.*

II. Put on the Armor of God (Eph. 6:11–17)

Paul described the Christian's armor as God's provision for being "strong in the Lord."

A. Purpose for the armor (6:11–13)

Before identifying the various parts of the Christian soldier's armor, Paul explained why each of us must put on the whole armor: "That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (6:11). A soldier sitting at a desk in his homeland during peacetime doesn't need to wear battle gear and gather weapons, but a soldier at war needs to be dressed for the occasion with weapons in hand. The New Testament does not picture the Christian soldier in peaceful, nonthreatening surroundings; instead, it portrays him or her at war with Satan. The Christian soldier must always wear the whole armor of God and be always alert. Satan never calls a truce, and he is the master of deception. His strategies range from infiltration to guerrilla warfare.

The word "against" (which appears six times in Ephesians 6:11 and 12) suggests "face-to-face."

Peter thought he could stand firm in his own strength, but he failed (Matt. 26:69–75).

READ: 1 Peter 5:8. **ASK:** What do we learn about the Devil by comparing him to a roaring lion? (Q4) *Lions roar to protect their territory. The Devil wants to keep believers from being effective and bringing more of his captives out of the darkness and into the light. He works to discourage and defeat believers.*

Paul assured the Ephesians that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). In the Greek world, to lose a wrestling match sometimes brought serious consequences. The judges of the competition gouged out the loser's eyes. Once we are aware of this custom, we can understand that Paul's analogy of a wrestling match conveys the imagery of a desperate fight with life-threatening consequences. This fight isn't something we can join if we feel up to it. Each of us is automatically enlisted by virtue of being a believer.

ASK: Which of the life issues Paul covered in Ephesians 4:1—6:9 seem to be Satan's favorite battlefronts? (Q5) *Marriage and parent-child relationships; heart issues such as bitterness and purity.*

"Principalities" and "powers" (6:12) are demons, Satan's fallen angels. The "rulers of the darkness of this world" are high-ranking fallen angels in Satan's kingdom. Satan belongs to this group of fallen angels, since he is their chief. The "high places" are the lower heavens, the lowest of which is the atmosphere surrounding Earth. The second heaven is outer space, the sphere of the stars and planets. We cannot see these evil spirit beings, but they surround us. We should never have an "out-of-sight-out-of-mind" attitude when it comes to Satan's army. We must purposely wear the whole armor of God to withstand such diabolical enemies (6:13).

The more effectively you live for Christ, the more prone Satan will be to attack you. The account of the early church demonstrates this truth. Satan attacked the apostles and other spiritual leaders furiously as they invaded his territory and proclaimed the gospel.

READ: Acts 5:40, 41; 7:59, 60. **ASK:** How did the apostles respond to the Devil's fury? (Q6) *The apostles rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ. They continued to serve God, willing to accept the risk. Stephen was unmoved and concerned for the spiritual well-being of his attackers.*

Paul wrote about withstanding and standing. To withstand is to oppose and resist. We need God's armor to oppose the Devil in the day of battle, "the evil day" (6:13). "Stand" (6:14) depicts a soldier who has emerged victorious from the heat of combat and is surrounded by fallen foes.

B. Pieces of the armor (6:14–17)

1. Belt of truth (6:14)

If a soldier were wearing a long garment, he would gather it up from between his knees and tuck it in his belt. That's what it means to gird one's waist. The tucked-in garment allowed the soldier to move his legs freely so he wouldn't fall before his enemies. The soldier's belt also secured the breastplate and provided a place to attach a sword. A soldier would be slowed by his garments, defenseless, and unable to fight back without his belt.

The "belt" as a piece of the armor of God stands for truth and honesty. Believers must live honestly before others and before God. That's called integrity. A believer who obeys God outwardly but hides sin in his heart won't be effective in battle because he is living a lie. Satan, the father of lies, loves to see believers enter battle without their belt of truth (John 8:44).

ASK: What are some truths believers must remember in battle? (Q7) *God is sovereign, loving, true, and faithful. God's power in them is greater than Satan's power.*

2. Breastplate of righteousness (6:14)

The Roman soldier's breastplate protected his heart and other vital organs (Eph. 6:14). The breastplate as a piece of the armor of God reminds us that God declared us righteous in Christ the moment we trusted in Christ. With Christ's righteousness, we can live obediently to God and reject Satan's lies about who we are as a believer.

Satan loves to cause us to doubt we can obey God. When we sin, he is quick to tell us what a failure we are. "Why do you even keep trying to obey God?" he mocks. "You'll always be a miserable failure. Stop the struggle!"

ASK: Have you ever had Satan tell you that you're a miserable failure? How did you respond? (Q8)

We, of course, are already complete in Christ. He made each of us a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), so we stand righteous before God. As believers in Christ, we can live obediently by God's power. That is reality. Giving up and calling ourselves hopeless failures is to give in to Satan's attacking blows.

3. Sandals of peace (6:15)

Roman soldiers fought on all kinds of terrain, like wet rocks, slippery grass, or

loose gravel. They wore sandals with stabilizing straps up the leg and metal studs on the soles to keep their footing sure no matter the terrain.

As a piece of the armor of God, the “shoes” of peace help us stand our ground spiritually. We know we have peace with God through Jesus’ death on the cross for us. And we have a gospel to share that brings peace to those held captive by the enemy (Rom. 10:13–15).

ASK: When have you witnessed the gospel bringing peace to a “new recruit”? (Q9)

4. Shield of faith (6:16)

In Paul’s day enemy soldiers prepared hollow arrows filled with flammable liquid and a burning wick. When the “fiery darts” hit a soldier, the wick would ignite the liquid that doused the soldier. The burning liquid often proved devastating.

As believers we are to carry a shield of faith, meaning we should have firm confidence in God’s promises and power. By applying faith in God to our everyday experiences, we can extinguish Satan’s “fiery darts.”

Satan’s fiery darts might be in the form of hateful thoughts about other people, doubts about God, or deep desires for sin. Putting our faith in God keeps us from believing Satan’s lies and letting them discourage us.

ASK: How has the shield of faith recently extinguished one of Satan’s fiery darts in your life? (Q10)

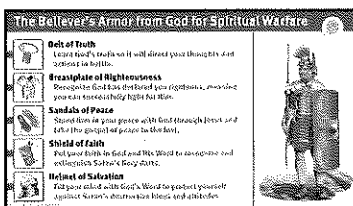
5. Helmet of salvation (6:17)

The last defensive item Paul mentioned is the helmet of salvation. Since he was addressing Christians, he didn’t use the word “salvation” in the sense of the saving of one’s soul. By “salvation,” he meant present deliverance from the power of Satan and sin. Just as a helmet protects a soldier’s head, so the helmet of salvation protects the mind from the destructive philosophies and attitudes Satan wants us to adopt.

Churches that downplay doctrine for the sake of unity essentially ask their fellow soldiers to take off their helmets in the heat of battle. A band of soldiers will not be effective if the basis of their unity is refusal to wear the helmet of salvation.

ASK: How might a church encourage its members to wear their “helmets” in battle? (Q11) *By having a clear doctrinal statement based on a normal interpretation of Scripture, by preaching exegetically, and by choosing doctrinally sound Sunday School curriculum, like that from Regular Baptist Press.*

DISPLAY: Visual 30—The Believer’s Armor. Review each piece of the armor of God.



III. Join the Battle (Eph. 6:17–24)

A. Pick up your sword (6:17)

Our fight against Satan and the hosts of evil includes offensive strategy as well

as defensive strategy. We must invade his territory. Paul described our offensive weapon as “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (6:17). We must become so acquainted with Scripture that the Spirit can use it to guide and direct our thoughts and actions in battle.

ASK: What verses have you memorized in preparation for Satanic attacks? (Q12)

A Roman soldier used his sword to parry a blow from an opponent’s sword and to strike a blow at the enemy. The Christian’s sword is the sword *of the Spirit* because it is the Holy Spirit Who inspired the Bible and uses God’s Word to accomplish God’s purposes in our lives. When we attempt to invade Satan’s territory, we must be well armed with Scripture.

DISPLAY: Visual 31—The Believer’s Weapon. Read the summary and note that the Roman sword became greatly feared throughout their kingdom. They never fought without it and wielded it well.

B. Support your fellow soldiers (6:18–24)

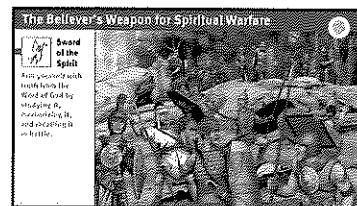
In addition to being fully equipped with the armor of God, the Christian soldier must also have an effective prayer life. Paul exhorted us to be “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (6:18). “All prayer” includes intercession, supplication, confession, praise, and thanksgiving.

In verse 18 Paul cited four qualifications concerning prayer. First, we must pray “always.” Prayer should be unceasing. Second, we should pray “in the Spirit,” meaning we must follow what the Holy Spirit directs us to pray. Third, we must be attentive while we pray. Paul exhorted us to be “watching.” Fourth, we must pray for all fellow believers. When Satan attacks a Christian, the fervent prayers of other Christians effectively help repel the attack. Paul knew his ministry would fall flat without prayer support.

READ: Ephesians 6:19, 20. **ASK:** Describe the openness Paul used in requesting prayer for himself. (Q13) *In praying for boldness, Paul recognized he depends on God’s power to stand and fight. He humbly admitted he could not be God’s missionary on his own.*

ASK: How might refusing to share our fears and struggles help the enemy gain ground in his battle against us? (Q14) *When we don’t share, we isolate ourselves in our battle to stand for Christ and live obediently to Him.*

Paul closed his letter to the Ephesians with a personal word and a benediction. He cared about his fellow believers at Ephesus, and he knew they cared about him too. They would want to know about his own circumstances as a prisoner in Rome. So he wrote that Tychicus would update them about his situation from the “battlefront” in Rome (6:21). Because he was a Roman citizen and considered a first-time offender, Paul fared better than some other prisoners. He rented his own house (Acts 28:30) and could entertain and preach to visitors. Such



news, brought to Ephesus by Tychicus, would comfort the Ephesians.

Paul's salutation demonstrated his belief in what the Holy Spirit had guided him to write in his letter to the Ephesians (6:23, 24). Peace would guard the Ephesians' hearts through all life's difficulties. Love would bind their hearts to God and to one another, and faith would enable them to trust God for all they needed as they fought for Him together.

Finally, Paul wished grace to all those at Ephesus who loved the Lord Jesus with an unfailing, undying love (6:24). He had greeted them with grace at the beginning of his letter (1:2), and he wished them grace at the close of his letter. Truly, when we greet our Christian friends or say farewell to them, God's grace should come to mind. After all, we share life in Christ because of His great grace.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Missing Pieces

DISPLAY: Visual 30—The Believer's Armor. Encourage your learners to review the armor of God and examine their lives to see what pieces, if any, they have neglected to take up. (Q15)

Sword Skills

ASK: How have you been swinging your sword lately? What will you do to sharpen your skills with it this week? (Q16)

Support the Troops

Close the course by having volunteers pray for the class in their daily spiritual warfare. Make sure they include a praise to God for His enabling, victory-ensuring grace.

Memory Verse

Encourage your learners to memorize Ephesians 6:11. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

